DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 050 669 HE 002 130

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TITLE Fifty Top-Rated Institutions: Their Role in Graduate Education.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Berkeley. Center for Research and Development in Higher Education.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 3p.
JOURNAL CIT Research Reporter; v6 n1 p7-8 1971

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Doctoral Degrees, *Doctoral Programs, Educational Quality, *Graduate Study, *Higher Education, *Manpower Needs, Surveys, Universities

ABSTRACT

This article analyses some of the data collected in a survey by the American Council on Education on the quality of graduate programs in 1970. It discusses: (1) the ratings of faculties of the 50 top-rated graduate schools compared with 80 other institutions; (2) the number of "quality programs" in the humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, physical sciences, and engineering in the 50 top-rated graduate schools as compared with 80 others; (3) the regional strength of the 50 top-rated institutions; and (4) the number and percent of programs at the 50 top institutions that scored below a quality standard. The paper concludes with the suggestion that, although there are a substantial number of unsatisfactory programs offered at the top 50 institutions, these graduate schools may be more than adequate to fill the needs for traditionally trained Ph.D's during the decade that lies ahead. (AF)

ED050669

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THEIR ROLE IN GRADUATE EDUCATION - Kenneth Roose

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FIFTY TOP-RATED INSTITUTIONS: THEIR ROLE IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

KENNETH ROOSE

In the new American Council on Education publication, *Ratings of Graduate Programs, 1970,* Alan Cartter's 1966 survey of the quality of graduate education was updated and expanded. In Cartter's survey, as well as in the present study, "quality" was determined from the responses of a sample of scholars representing informed opinion about the quality of graduate departments in major U.S. institutions. The new survey includes ratings of 36 fields of study in 130 institutions granting the doctor's degree. Questionnaires were sent to more than 8,000 scholars, and usable responses were received from three-fourths of them.

My analysis of the data collected in this survey of quality leads me to suggest that the capacity of 50 top-rated institutions may be more than adequate to fill the needs for traditionally trained PhDs during the decade that lies ahead.

TABLE I: Ratings of Faculties at 50 Top-rated Graduate Schools Compared With 80 Other Institutions

Ratings	*Top 50 Institutions*		*Remaining 80 Institutions*	
	No.	*Percent*	*No.*	*Percent*
Distinguished . .	198	97	6	3
Strong	546	91	52	9
Good	330	71	137	29
Adequate plus . .	255	45	315	55
Unsatisfactory . .	106	13	681	87
TOTAL . .	1,435	55	1,191	45

RATINGS OF PROGRAMS OF FIFTY TOP-RATED INSTITUTIONS

Table I compares the ratings of the faculties of 50 top graduate institutions with the other 80 institutions surveyed. The faculties are distributed according to the rating categories of *distinguished, strong, good, adequate plus,* and *unsatisfactory*. The top-rated institutions have 97 percent of the *distinguished* faculties, 91 percent of the *strong,* 71 percent of the *good,* 45 percent of *adequate plus,* and 13 percent of the *unsatisfactory*. In all, these 50 institutions have 72 percent of the faculties rated of sufficient quality to carry out PhD programs.

The distribution of ratings within major divisions is presented in Table II. The 50 top institutions conduct 85 percent of the *adequate plus* or above quality programs in humanities, 81 percent in social sciences, 64 percent in biological sciences, 70 percent in physical sciences, and 66 percent in engineering. The percent of qualified programs in particular fields offered by the top 50 institutions ranges from 49 percent in entomology, to 100 percent in Russian. It is clear that these 50 established institutions conduct most of the quality programs in all five of the major academic divisions in graduate education.

TABLE II: "Quality" Programs at 50 Top-rated Graduate Schools Compared with 80 others[1]

Field of Study	*Top 50 Institutions*		*Remaining 80 Institutions*	
	No.	*Percent*	*No.*	*Percent*
Humanities . .	306	85	55	15
Social Sciences . .	265	81	62	19
Biological Sciences	404	64	231	36
Physical Sciences .	204	70	86	30
Engineering . .	150	66	76	34

[1] "Quality" is defined by academic discipline ratings of distinguished, strong, good, and adequate plus (Ratings of 2.0 to 5.0 on a five-point scale).

REGIONAL STRENGTH OF THE FIFTY TOP-RATED INSTITUTIONS

Despite the overall strength of these 50 institutions, it is still possible that important regions of the country may be inadequately served by quality graduate faculties and programs. To check this, I distributed the institutions by regional categories of Northeast, East, South, Midwest, and West. The South category includes the states comprising the Southern Regional Education Board while those in the West are the member states of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Table III shows that the regions appear to be adequately served by the quality programs of the 50 top-rated institutions.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Although the 50 top-rated institutions appear to provide impressive evidence of quality efforts in graduate education, their future is not without problems. For one thing, higher education in the next decade faces a strain

TABLE III: Percent of All "Quality Programs" at 50 Top-rated Institutions

Region	*All "Quality" Programs* (2.0–5.0)	*Percent of All Programs with Scores of:*			
		Distinguished (4.0–5.0)	*Strong* (3.0-3.9)	*Good* (2.5–2.9)	*Adequate plus* (2.0–2.4)
Northeast .	8	25	10	4	2
East . . .	17	15	21	18	14
Midwest .	23	25	32	24	11
South . .	12	2	14	14	12
West . .	12	29	14	11	5
All 50 Institutions	72	97	91	71	45

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TABLE IV: Number and Percent of Programs at 50 Top-rated Institutions that Score Below a Quality Standard

Region	*Programs That Score Below 2.0*	
	Number	*Percent of All Programs at Top 50*
All Regions . . .	106	7.4
Northeast . . .	6	4.0
East	20	5.9
Midwest	25	5.6
South	44	16.5
West	11	4.7

on its resources as never before in its history. Even institutions with well-regarded programs may have to consider trimming or cutting back in order to shift resources to areas of higher and more demanding priority. Where regions are now abundantly supported by quality programs, some cooperative efforts among quality institutions may be highly justified.

Although the 1969 survey is, on the whole, reassuring about the quality of graduate education, the data on faculty ratings of 50 top institutions presented in Table I revealed that 106 (13 percent) of all unsatisfactory programs are being offered in these quality institutions. Table IV indicates that 7.4 percent, or more than one in 14 of their faculties, even now are inadequate. The faculty deficiency ranges from one in 25 in the Northeast, to one in six in the South. Surely time is running out on substandard programs in top-rated institutions. Such programs should either be shaped up or eliminated. Indeed, I suspect this decision may soon be out of our hands. With the pressure on resources, something must give way and in what better areas than inadequate graduate programs!

As a more general comment on resource use, program duplications, and substandard graduate efforts, less well established institutions must share more fields and work out collaborative arrangements with other institutions in their area. This effort is necessary to protect graduate students from inferior programs and to contribute to the financial stability of ailing institutions.

My final observations concern the meaning for these 50 institutions of the growing supply of PhDs. Allan Cartter's forecasts have proved remarkably accurate; however, the implications for the future of graduate education have yet to be thought out. Attention should be given to particular areas in which a relative shortage of PhDs still persists. It could be argued that from the standpoint of the national interest, graduate education of the traditional sort might well be concentrated in the 50 institutions now having the top-rated programs. In view of their growing capacity to meet the expected demand for PhDs of this type, at least in the teaching and research roles in the university, can there any longer be justification for further expansion of untested programs in these fields? If many of the PhD products of the decade of the seventies are to find employment in teaching situations such as junior or community colleges, or in applied research efforts in government and industry, then, it is time to provide for an effective division of labor among the institutions offering graduate education in order to get this job done.

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The Research Reporter

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